

MONTHLY UPDATE

Department of Children's Advocacy Monthly Update
Connecting with and updating our community

A Message from the State Child Advocate



Amanda Whittle, J.D., CWLS
State Child Advocate and Director

Thank you for reviewing the March 2022 Monthly Update.

In addition to the highlights that are included in this edition, our agency's Senate budget subcommittee hearing was held this month. On March 23, 2022, I presented DCA's FY23 budget to the Health and Human Services Subcommittee and was joined by Deputy Child Advocate of System Improvement Kayla Capps and Admin Agency Budget Director Jason Epting.

The Department of Children's Advocacy's FY23 budget request includes \$800,000 in additional recurring funding and \$175,000 in non-recurring funding in addition to one-time American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. The agency's budget hearing before the House Ways and Means subcommittee was held on January 12, 2022. The budget request is explained in the 2021 Annual Report which can be found [here](#).

IN THIS ISSUE

**MESSAGE FROM THE
STATE CHILD ADVOCATE**

**GOVERNOR MCMASTER
PROCLAIMS MARCH AS
SOCIAL WORK MONTH**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO
DCA STAFF**

**WELCOME TO NEW STATE
BOARD MEMBERS**

**CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER
HIGHLIGHTS COURT
IMPROVEMENT**

**CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE'S
ANNUAL REPORT**

**DARLINGTON GUARDIAN
AD LITEM OFFICE MOVE**

**SCDHEC PROVIDES
ENDEMIC APPROACH**

**Senate Finance Committee
Health and Human Services Subcommittee
FY 2022-23 Budget Hearing**



Amanda F. Whittle, J.D., CWLS
*Agency Director
March 23, 2022*



Governor Henry McMaster Proclaims March as Social Work Month



Governor Henry McMaster proclaimed March as Social Work Month.

The National Association of Social Workers is the largest membership organization of professional social workers and shares, "The social work profession was founded in social change. Throughout the profession's history, social workers have sought to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources and opportunities that allow them to meet their basic needs." Take the NASW's "How much do you know about social work" quiz [here](#).

The 2022 Social Work Month theme is "The Time is Right for Social Work." We are grateful for the contributions social workers make to improve outcomes for children and families within South Carolina's system of care.



THE TIME IS RIGHT
FOR SOCIAL WORK



Congratulations on Retirement

Congratulations to Petra Clay-Jones



Congratulations to Petra Clay-Jones who retired from the Department of Children's Advocacy on March 31, 2022. Petra served as DCA's Deputy Child Advocate of Program Operations beginning October 17, 2019. During this time, she served as Interim Director for the Continuum of Care, Guardian ad Litem, and Foster Care Review divisions when the director positions for those divisions were vacant.

Petra worked with Continuum of Care in the mid-1990s then returned in 2014 as the Regional Program Director for the Upstate Region. She was also Continuum of Care's Division Director from 2017 until 2019.

Petra earned her Bachelor's degree from Tuskegee University in 1982 and earned her Master's degree in social work from Clark Atlanta University in 1984. She is a Licensed Social Worker and is licensed as an LISW-CPS in South Carolina. She has provided counseling in both private and public settings and has taught Human Services and Social Work graduate level courses. Petra has been married for more than 30 years and has two sons.

We wish Petra the best in her retirement!

Congratulations!

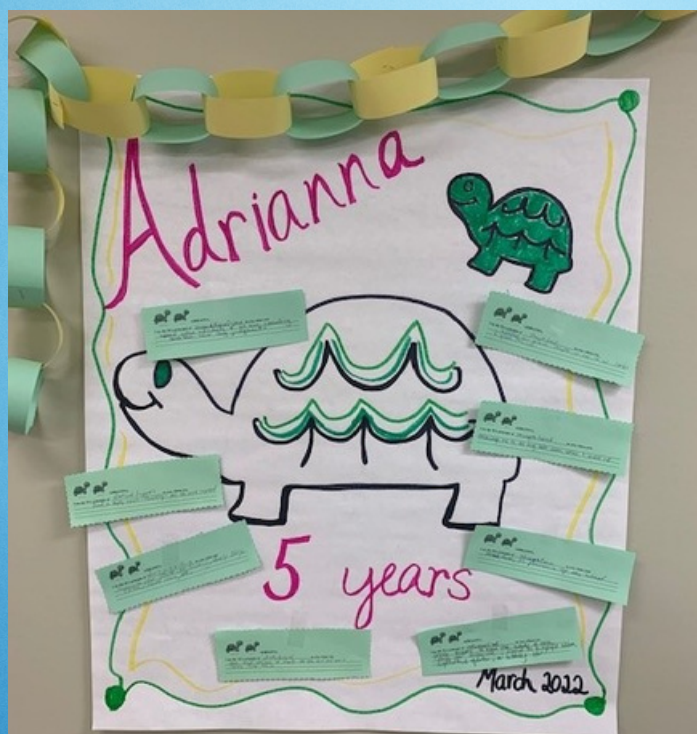
Continuum of Care Region B Celebrates Staff's Milestones



During their monthly meeting this month, Continuum of Care Region B celebrated “work anniversary” dates for:

- **Carlos O'Neal** ----- 18 years
- **Adrianna Onwawoma** ----- 5 years
- **Tanya Barrineau** ----- 2 years

Carlos, Adrianna, and Tanya each started their service with COC in the month of March. In the spirit of Wraparound, Region B team members each identified one of the High Fidelity Wraparound principles that they see in Carlos, Adrianna, and Tanya and the reason why. Each person wrote their comments on a piece of paper and shared with the group. Carlos, Adrianna and Tanya were recognized for their individual commitments to COC and the strengths they each bring to the Region B team! Congratulations on reaching these career milestones!



Welcome to New FCRB State Board Members



The Department of Children's Advocacy and Division of Foster Care Review welcome Mary Long and Jane Daniel as new appointees to the Foster Care Review Board's State Board.



Jane Daniel was recently appointed by Governor Henry McMaster and confirmed by the Senate to serve as the 4th Congressional District representative on the Foster Care Review Board's State Board. Jane currently serves on Board 13C in Greenville. In 2021, Jane was presented with the Vernon Lee McCurry Lifetime Achievement Award at the Foster Care Review Board's Annual Professional Development Day. She previously served on the State Board from 2000 to 2004. She has several ideas regarding how the FCRB's processes and efficacy could be improved. Jane Daniel is positive and motivating, and we congratulate her on her appointment.



Mary Long was recently appointed by Governor Henry McMaster and confirmed by the Senate to serve as the 5th Congressional District representative on the Foster Care Review Board's State Board. Mary currently serves on Board 5E in Kershaw. Mary was recognized as Review Board Member of the Year during Foster Care Review Board's 2021 Annual Professional Development Day. In addition to serving on her own local board, she serves as a substitute when there are not enough Board members available for a quorum. Mary Long is a valuable part of the FCRB, and we congratulate her on her appointment.

Congratulations: Guardian ad Litem Promotion



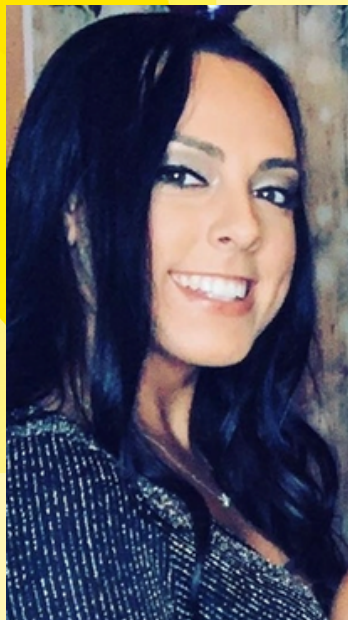
Tamara Brown
Program Coordinator II
Cass Elias McCarter
Guardian ad Litem Program

The Department of Children's Advocacy welcomes **Tamara Brown** as the **Program Coordinator II** for **Kershaw County**. Tamara Brown is a native of Camden, South Carolina, where she and her family currently reside. She is the mother of an amazing baby boy. Tamara is a 2017 graduate of the Claflin University where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice.

Prior to this position, Tamara was a Program Coordinator I for Florence County. Tamara is currently a specialist in the United States Army National Guard. Tamara is extremely excited about her new role in the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program and serving in her own community.



Welcome to the Guardian ad Litem Program



Megan Blair
Case Manager
Cass Elias McCarter
Guardian ad Litem Program

The Department of Children's Advocacy welcomes **Megan Blair** as the **Case Manager** for **Horry County**. Megan is originally from New York and graduated from Coastal Carolina University with her Bachelor's in Psychology.

After graduating from college, Megan spent a few years working in the medical field and then worked as a Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigator for DSS in Horry County. Megan has always had a passion to help others and is very excited to be a part of the GAL program.



Children's Law Center Highlights Court Improvement

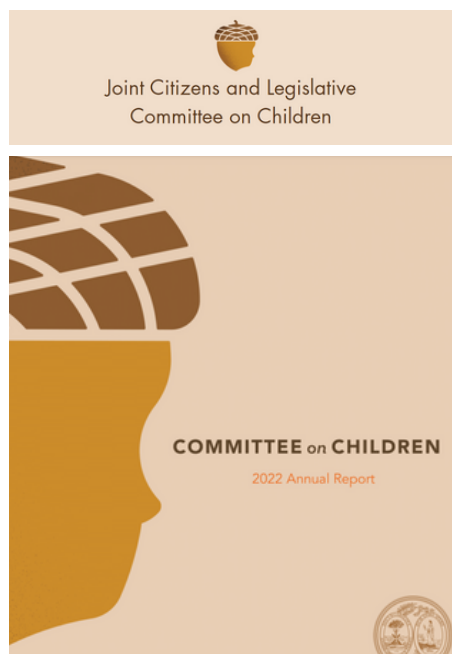


The Children's Law Center was created in 1995. In collaboration with South Carolina Court Administration and the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS), the Center administers the court liaison program to improve the legal processing of child protection cases. Court liaisons work throughout the state to track cases, monitor hearings, address issues that might cause delays, and summarize case files to assist judges and DSS. Visit the Children's Law Center's website [here](#).

Cody Lidge, MPA, Court Improvement Program (CIP) Director with the Children's Law Center of the University of South Carolina School of Law provided the following highlights from the February 2022 Court Liaison Report:

- There is a 36% increase in the number of Termination of Parental Rights (TPRs) granted in 2022 through February than during the same time last year.
- The February 2022 continuance rate is the lowest monthly continuance rate in more than two years.
- Each region except the Pee Dee region decreased its continuance rate. The Upstate reported the lowest rate at 23%.
- Quality Hearing markers continue to improve for a number of counties.

Children's Committee Publishes 2022 Annual Report



The Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children (Children's Committee) has published its 2022 Annual Report. The report includes:

- JCLCC legislation enacted during 2021
- Mental Health
- Juvenile Justice
- Child Wellbeing

View the 2022 Annual Report [here](#)

New Location for Darlington County GAL Office



Meeting space at the new
Darlington County Guardian ad Litem office

The Darlington County Guardian ad Litem Office outgrew its former office location and has relocated to 718 South 4th Street, Hartsville to an overall more efficient office space.

The new location is ground level and easily accessible for staff and visitors at the Guardian ad Litem office. There is an open entry space for volunteer trainings, in-service programs, and staff meetings. The new building has four private office spaces, with space for an additional employee.

The Darlington County staff are very excited about the new location and look forward to a fresh start!

The new address is:

Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program -

**Darlington County Office
718 South Fourth Street
Hartsville, SC 29550**

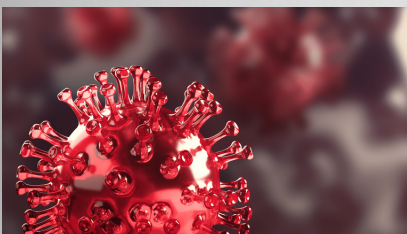
**Phone: 843.383.2333
Cell: 843.906.4000**



Managing COVID-19 as an Endemic Virus



Find school and
childcare resource
information [here](#)



As shared on S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC)'s website: "The term "endemic" refers to a disease that is circulating in a community at an expected or normal level, minus an occasional outbreak (for example, the flu). South Carolina, along with other states and the federal government, has begun treating COVID-19 as an endemic virus due to declining case and hospitalization rates as well as the increased availability of vaccines, treatments, and rapid testing. Through these resources along with preventive strategies like wearing masks when indicated, we can keep severe cases to a minimum and live our daily lives with an acceptable level of COVID-19 in the community."

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC)'s endemic approach was discussed in more detail during SCDHEC's March 2 COVID-19 Media Briefing. SCDHEC is taking a layered approach to decrease community spread and reduce the strain on South Carolina's healthcare systems. Learn more [here](#).